

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
(ISO) W

-----046310 311610Z /43

P 302100Z AUG 78

FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1450

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 QUEBEC 0306

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA

SUBJECT: PQ MILITANTS FEAR WEAKENING OF GOVERNMENT'S INDEPENDENT-
IST IDEOLOGY

REF: QUEBEC 0304

1. ACCORDING TO AN ARTICLE APPEARING IN AUGUST 30 LA PRESSE, A NUMBER OF PQ MILITANTS, INCLUDING SOME "AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE PARTY" HAVE DECIDED TO PRESS FOR A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PQ NATIONAL COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE PARTY'S SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION OPTION. QUEBEC CORRESPONDENT LYSIANE GAGNON WRITES THAT THIS DECISION IS MOTIVATED BY INCREASING CONCERN THAT GOVERNMENT LEADERS, PARTICULARLY RENE LEVESQUE AND CLAUDE MORIN, ARE WAVERING IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO FULL INDEPENDENCE FOR QUEBEC. PROPOSAL TO HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IN MONTREAL NOVEMBER 18 WILL BE MADE AT THE COUCIL'S NEXT REGULAR MEETING, SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN ROUYN AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IS THE PQ'S HIGHEST GOVERNING BODY BETWEEN CONVENTIONS. (SEE QUEBEC A-05)

2. ARTICLE GOES ON TO STATE THAT "NUMEROUS PARTY MILITANTS, COMING NOT ONLY FROM MONTREAL (TRADITIONAL STRONGHOLD OF
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PQ ULTRAS) BUT ALSO FROM OUTLYING REGIONS SUCH AS SAGUENAY-LAC ST. JEAN AND MAURICIE, FEEL THAT MORIN HAS COME TO FAVOR A FORM OF 'RENEWED FEDERALISM' IN WHICH THE MARGIN OF POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY OF QUEBEC WOULD BE REDUCED TO A MINIMUM." THESE MILITANTS PROPOSE TO PUT AN END TO THE "CONFUSION ABOUT SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION ENGENDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT" BY SETTING THE PARTY UP AS A SORT OF "WATCHDOG OVER THE PROGRAM" TO ENSURE THAT THE

GOVERNMENT DOES NOT STRAY TOO FAR FROM THE INDEPENDENTIST OBJECTIVE. "WE ARE AT A TURNING POINT," ONE REGIONAL ASSOCIATION HEAD IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "WE MUST ENSURE THAT, BY DINT OF WATERING ITS WINE IN ORDER TO WIN THE REFERENDUM, THE PARTY DOES NOT LOSE ITS MILITANT WING. THE PARTY MEMBERS HAVE NO INTENTION OF GOING DOOR-TO-DOOR SELLING SOME SORT OF VAGUE DUPLESSIS-STYLE AUTONOMISM." ANOTHER SAID: "WE CANNOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO LOSE THIS REFERENDUM. BUT NEITHER CAN WE ALLOW OURSELVES TO WIN IT AT THE PRICE OF AN EXCESSIVE DILUTION (OF THE INDEPENDENCE OBJECTIVE) WHICH IS THE VERY REASON FOR BEING OF THE PARTI QUEBECOIS. AN IDEOLOGICALLY-MOTIVATED PARTY CANNOT FOLLOW PUBLIC-OPINION POLLS. IF THE POLLS SHOW THAT THE MAJORITY IS OPPOSED TO OUR CONSTITUTIONAL OPTION, IT IS PERHAPS BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF SEEMS TO HAVE LOST SIGHT OF THE OBJECTIVE. WE WILL NOT CONVINCE PEOPLE BY MAKING EXCUSES FOR BEING INDEPENDENTISTS AND BY SAYING THAT NOTHING WILL CHANGE (WHEN QUEBEC BECOMES SOVEREIGN)."

3. CLAUDE MORIN'S RECENT DECLARATION REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF A "CENTRAL PARLIAMENT" BETWEEN QUEBEC AND CANADA, ARTICLE CINTINUES, WAS THE STRAW THAT BROKE THE CAMEL'S BACK, EVEN IF IT IS APPARENT THAT MORIN WAS MISQUOTED. LEVESQUE'S AND MORIN'S RECENT STATEMENTS REGARDING "A THIRD OPTION," A "NEW CONCEPTION OF FEDERALISM," AND "A REAL CONFEDERATION" HAVE INCREASED CONCERN AMONG MILITANTS THAT "CERTAIN INFLUENCES" ARE AT WORK ON THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS MINISTER OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFIDENTIAL

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AFFAIRS. THERE IS PARTICULAR CONCERN ABOUT MORIN'S DEPUTY MINISTER, ROBERT NORMAND, WHO OCCUPIES A KEY POSITION IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE REFERENDUM AND WHO ALLEGEDLY HAS FEDERALIST SYMPATHIES.

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

(ISO) W

-----046256 311608Z /43

P 302100Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1451
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MONTREAL

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4. PARTICULARLY DISTURBING TO THE MILITANTS, ARTICLE CONCLUDES, IS THE FACT THAT THE ROLE OF THE PARTY IN THE REFERENDUM SEEMS TO BE LIMITED TO THAT OF CAMPAIGN ORGANIZER. MILITANTS ARE VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED FROM THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ESTABLISHING THE CONTENT OF THE SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION OPTION, WHICH IS ENTIRELY IN THE HANDS OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL WOULD CONSTITUTE AN EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE MILITANTS TO INJECT THEMSELVES INTO THE POLICY PROCESS.

5. COMMENT: MORIN HAS LONG BEEN DISTRUSTED BY MILITANTS WITHIN PQ. AS MEASURE OF THE DEPTHS OF THIS DISTRUST TWO OF MORIN'S CABINET COLLEAGUES, BERUBE AND DUHAIME, HAVE PRIVATELY WARNED ME TO BE CAREFUL WHEN DEALING WITH HIM. HE IS LOOKED UPON AS AN OPPORTUNIST MORE DEDICATED TO ACQUIRING AND RETAINING POWER THAN IN PURSUING NATIONALIST IDEALS OF PQ. BY ASSOCIATION, SOME OF THIS DISTRUST HAS SOILED LEVESQUE'S SOVEREIGNTIST ESCUTCHEON. RECENT ATTEMPTS BY TWO PEQUISTES STRATEGISTS TO MAKE ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION MORE PLAUSIBLE TO DOUBTING POPULATION ARE BOUND TO EXCITE FEARS AMONG PARTY PURISTS. PRESUMABLY, LEVESQUE AND MORIN ARE PREPARED GAMBLE THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN INTERNAL DISCONTENT WITHIN PQ FOR TIME BEING OR, IF THIS NOT POSSIBLE, LIMIT DISAFFECTIONS TO MODEST NUMBER OF TROUBLESOME EXTREMISTS.
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THEY NO DOUBT REASON THAT DISSIDENTS ON LEFT HAVE NO WHERE TO GO POLITICALLY AND PUBLIC DISASSOCIATION WITH THESE ELEMENTS CAN ONLY STRENGTHEN APPEAL OF PQ AMONG CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT QUEBECOIS NATIONALISTS WHO HAVE HITHERTO BEEN WARY OF PQ BECAUSE OF ITS RADICAL IMAGE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LINE, SOVEREIGNTY, PARTY MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978QUEBEC00306
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780356-0245
Format: TEL
From: QUEBEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978088/aaaaagnm.tel
Line Count: 159
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 79c6ea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 QUEBEC 304
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1784335
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PQ MILITANTS FEAR WEAKENING OF GOVERNMENT'S INDEPENDENT- IST IDEOLOGY
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/79c6ea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014